

# Meeting summary for School Nurse Advisory Council Meeting (10/29/2024)

## Quick recap

The meeting involved discussions about the challenges faced by school nurses in Connecticut, including the lack of certification (Special Services Endorsement-SSE) and the difficulty in hiring Registered Nurses (RNs). The group also discussed the potential benefits of pursuing certification (SSE) for school nurses and the importance of having a standardized preparation for school nurses. Lastly, they discussed the role of school nurses in attendance teams and the upcoming award ceremony in November.

## Next steps

- Chlo to post meeting minutes on SDE website after her 10-11am health and safety meeting.
- Donna to inform CNA about issues with school nurse orientation capacity and cost.
- Verna to schedule a lunch meeting with Donna to discuss next steps for the committee and certification efforts.
- Verna to talk to Paula about attending the CNA award dinner for Donna on November 13th.
- Chlo and Trisha to work together on assembling a team to review and update food allergy management guidelines.

## Summary

### Meeting Introduction and Participant Updates

The meeting began with Patricia and Donna discussing their current locations, with Patricia in the kitchen with her grandkids. Donna mentioned that Dave would be joining the meeting soon. Verna joined the meeting, mentioning that she was with her mom. Donna noted that Patrick and Karen couldn't join the meeting. Nancy joined the meeting, mentioning that she had to get permission to come in early for the meeting. Donna and Verna discussed the early meeting time. Nancy introduced her daughter, Ashley, who was also present. Trisha Donovan joined the meeting, and it was clarified that she should be addressed as Patricia (Trisha) Donovan, not Patricia Phelan. The conversation ended with Trisha mentioning that she was busy and dealing with allergy issues.

### Introductions and Challenges in Education

The meeting began with introductions from the participants, including Donna, Patricia, Nancy, Trish, David, Verna, Kristen, Christine, and Chlo. They discussed the challenges of scheduling meetings due to school timings and the need for flexibility. They also touched upon their roles and experiences in the education sector. The conversation ended with Donna mentioning that she would send out the meeting minutes for review and feedback.

### Frontline Health Advocates' Fraudulent Exemptions

Chlo provides an update on the concerning practice of a company called Frontline Health Advocates issuing fraudulent medical exemption certificates for vaccinations.

She explains that the state has implemented a portal system to verify medical exemptions, but some providers are finding ways around it by using fake license numbers. The Department of Public Health is working with legal counsel to provide guidance to school districts on handling these dubious exemptions. The discussion suggests potential recommendations to strengthen regulations around medical exemptions and the verification process.

Donna announces her upcoming retirement from the council after decades of advocacy work. She emphasizes the importance of the Connecticut Nurses Association in supporting school nurses legislatively. It is time for the next generation to determine the future of school nursing in Connecticut.

### **Nasal Epinephrine and Food Allergy Management**

Donna initiated a discussion about nasal epinephrine, a new delivery system for epinephrine. Trisha, a parent of food-allergic children and advocate, shared her experiences and the progress made in Connecticut regarding food allergy management policies. She mentioned the approval of Nefi, a nasal epinephrine spray, and its potential for needle-phobic individuals. Trisha also highlighted the need for legislative language adjustments to accommodate the new delivery systems. She mentioned the new FDA-approved guidelines for food allergy management and the addition of a ninth allergen, sesame, to the FDA list. The discussion also touched on the importance of label reading and never allowing a child to eat anything that the parent hasn't approved.

### **Regulation Revision Group and Training**

Donna, Chlo, Trisha, and Verna discussed the formation of a regulation revision group, with Chlo needing to review the initial team and possibly work with Trisha. They also discussed the need to train bus drivers, with Trisha expressing her willingness to work with the bus companies again. Barbara Ziogas, representing the American Academy of Pediatrics, expressed interest in joining the process. The group also discussed the issue of a Texas-based group, Frontline, charging for vaccine exemptions. Lastly, Verna reported that the AFT was busy due to the election and they planned to meet after the election to discuss further.

### **Challenges in Connecticut School Nursing**

Donna discussed the challenges faced by school nurses in Connecticut, including the lack of certification (SSE) and the difficulty in hiring Registered Nurses (RNs) due to low salaries and multiple responsibilities. She mentioned that the Connecticut Nurses Association and the Association of School Nurses (ASNC) are managing a standardized orientation for school nurses. Donna also highlighted the importance of school nurses in team meetings and the need for better communication between nurses and administrators. Verna and Patricia agreed with Donna's points, while Dave expressed concerns about the cost of the orientation and the difficulty in accommodating all nurses.

### **Certification Challenges and Potential Benefits**

The group discussed the challenges and potential benefits of pursuing certification (SSE) for school nurses. They acknowledged the resistance they've faced in the past, particularly from those who may not see the value in advanced education. However, they also recognized the importance of having standardized preparation for school nurses and the potential benefits of a certification program. The group agreed to

continue pursuing certification (SSE), despite the challenges, and to advocate for their profession. They also discussed the need for a virtual option for the school nurse orientation program, as well as the potential for a special services endorsement for school nurses. The group expressed a desire to pass the torch to the next generation of school nurses and to continue educating legislators about the importance of certification (SSE) for school nurses.

### **School Nurses in Attendance Teams**

The meeting involved a discussion between Verna, Donna, and Chlo about the role of school nurses in attendance teams. Verna mentioned a woman named Jan, who is a president of the American Federation of Teachers. Chlo then announced an upcoming event, a 'Super Talk Tuesday', where Susan Lavasseur, a district nursing supervisor from Westport, would discuss school nurses being on attendance teams. Donna expressed her concern about school nurses needing to assert themselves as equal professionals in the school setting. The team also discussed the importance of administrators buying into the discussion.

### **New Committee Members and Transition**

In the meeting, Donna expressed her excitement about the new members joining the committee and thanked Dave for his participation. She also mentioned that the next meeting would be on **November 19th at 8 o'clock.** Janine, a medical librarian at Yale, introduced herself and shared her passion for working with school nurses. Donna also announced her intention to step down from her role due to her upcoming 75th birthday. She mentioned that she would continue to help and mentor others. Verna and Donna discussed the possibility of finding a new person to take over Donna's role, with Paula, the ASNC President, considering a potential candidate. Verna also shared her personal struggles, including her son's motorcycle accident and her daughter's move to Maryland.

### **CNA Committee and Award Ceremony**

Verna and Donna discussed the possibility of meeting for lunch to discuss a potential candidate for involvement in SNAC as the CNA representative. Verna expressed interest in meeting with Donna and Paula, and suggested they could possibly meet via facetime if Paula couldn't attend in person. They also discussed the upcoming award ceremony in November, with Donna expressing her surprise at being nominated. Verna agreed to discuss the matter with Paula and Donna, and they agreed to set up a meeting to further discuss the committee and potential new members. Apologies to Donna Frechette for not recognizing her attendance.

#### **Attendance: Required by legislation**

**Verna Bernard-Jones AFT/Co chair SNAC Donna Kosiorowski CNA/Co chair SNAC**

**Patricia Phelan CFT Administrators**

**Patrick Stirk PSS North Haven-exc**

**Barbara Ziogas AAP**

**Chlo Bobrowski SDE**

**Christine Velazquez DPH**

**Sheila McKay CABA-abs**

**Pam Neleber ASNC/ Branford-abs**

**1199- no representative**

#### Additional members

Christin Kondash LEARN

David Cusick CREC

Donna Frechette Guilford

Nancy Roberts Bozrah

Karen Hart- exc

Kim Sandor CNA

Janene Batten Yale Medical Library

Invitees: Patricia (Trish) Donovan- parent/ Food Allergy Advocate